

PLATFORMCO

A3: TALENT MANAGEMENT & HR REVIEW

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Executive Summary

ProfessionalCo has a clear strategic objective to grow talent and revenue. The current vendor-supplied HR tech solution is inadequate to support ProfessionalCo's unique needs, now and into the future. Talent management must be integrated into a cohesive business strategy. This forms the foundation of our recommendations.

ProfessionalCo's greatest assets all get in the lift and go home at the end of the day. This model is also not sustainable. We recommend developing an internal HR and TM platform to enhance organisational culture and adapt to industry changes, with potential for future commercialisation.

By internally developing and owning a platform solution, we see opportunities to:

Externally: Integrate talent acquisition, development, tracking, and retention with ProfessionalCo's brand.

Internally: Develop a unified, dynamic TM language.

Strategically: Enhance long-term competitiveness and solidify ProfessionalCo's standing as an Employer of Choice.

Recommendation:

The existential threat externally comes from a dynamic marketplace, and internally from inconsistent policy-setting and a lack of technological skill-sets.

Adjusting course, ProfessionalCo needs a developer-driven self-service model that is rapidly composable, adaptable, reconfigurable, and reusable (Gartner, 2023a). This can only happen with an internal solution. Alternatives are slower, more costly in the long term, and less fit for purpose.

Intentional engagement with culture across the APAC division will dovetail with collaborative testing and refinement of the product. While commercialisation is beyond our remit, the ultimate extension of the work done internally should be an SaaS solution to grow and reinforce ProfessionalCo's reputation among clients and potential talent.

Contextual Analysis: Inflexion Point Demands New Preparedness

Culture, Hazards, Unreadiness

Emerging macro and societal factors necessitate a strategic response in talent management. A SWOT analysis reveals that ProfessionalCo's strengths lie in its strong brand and commitment to learning, while weaknesses include inadequate current HR solutions and outdated pay structures.

The APAC region offers significant opportunities for growth with uneven increases in wealth and commercial activity, pressuring talent acquisition and retention as competitors like Deloitte and PWC scale their regional operations.

An internally driven technological upgrade could provide long-lasting benefits.

Challenges and Opportunities

Industry Context

Rapid technological and societal changes position the professional services industry at an inflection point. Increasing reliance on digital tools necessitates technologically skilled workforces and proficient organisations, essential for sustainable TM and commercial objectives.

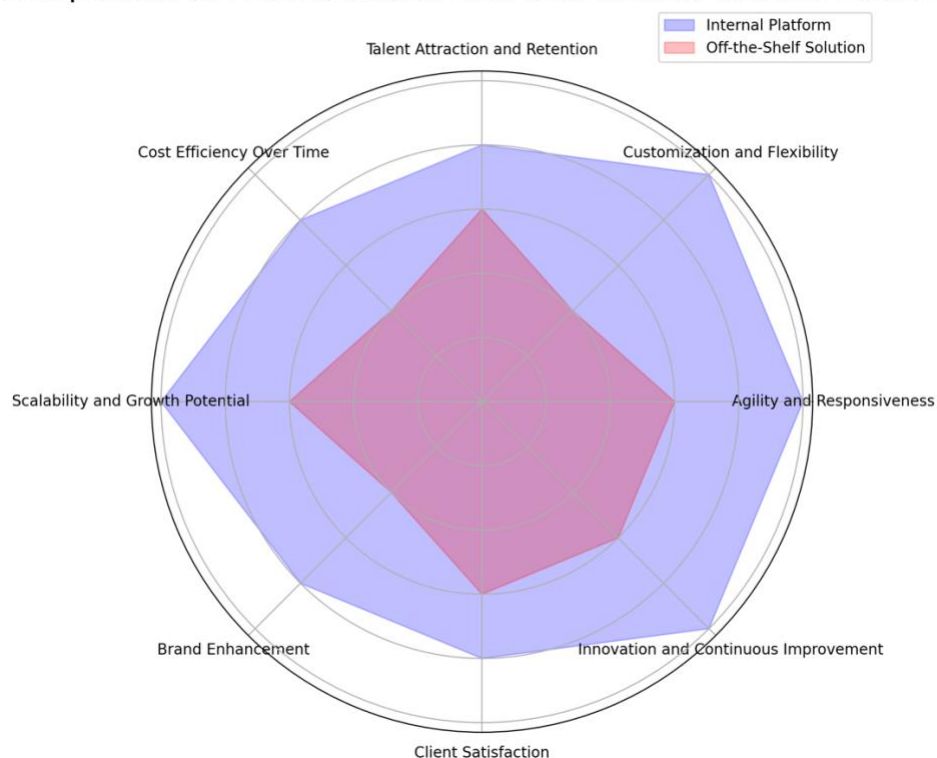
Cultural Diversity in APAC

Differentiated cultures within APAC BUs affect operational consistency and strategic priorities. They dilute brand identity, impacting talent and client acquisition. Greater cohesion, even through codifying cultures, will build value and reinforce the brand.

Internal Development and Refinement

Competitors offer flexible contracts with benefits like remote work and shared parental leave, while ProfessionalCo maintains GFC-era pay structures. Emerging professionals seek more than just monetary value, and would certainly value the safety of equity.

Comparison of ProfessionalCo with and without Internal Platform



Internally developing and refining ProfessionalCo's TM platform will also create a more agile, nuanced, and attractive solution than one reliant on external support. Businesses that resist updating their working methods and toolkits risk falling behind.

"Augmenting existing offerings with additional, contemporary services can significantly enhance their value proposition, leading to exponential commercial growth" (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Especially within a regional operation of over 40,000 team, greater cohesion – even if it is achieved by codifying differentiated cultures across the region and within the business itself – will build culture, grow value and reinforce brand strategy.

Grouped Market Analysis (Table)

Progressive Markets: Leverage internally driven technological advancements to streamline talent acquisition and retention.

Mixed Markets: Implement traditional talent strategies while gradually introducing internally developed digital tools.

Restrictive Markets: Focus on compliance and adapt to local regulations while promoting innovative talent management practices.

Group	Countries	Current Climate for Knowledge-Based Services	SaaS Regulation Regime
Progressive	Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea	High demand for consulting, finance, digital transformation, and strategy services; stable legal frameworks and supportive government policies	Supportive and advanced regulatory environments, clear data protection laws
Mixed	India, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam	Rapidly growing markets with diverse economies; increasing demand for consulting, finance, and digital transformation services	Evolving regulatory frameworks with supportive government initiatives, opportunities for early movers
Restrictive	China, Indonesia	Large markets with complex regulatory environments; significant demand for technology and finance services despite challenges	Restrictive regulatory environments, stringent data protection laws, and complex compliance requirements

This simple grouping of APAC countries describes the business climates for

- 1. knowledge-based services (current model)*
- 2. legal regimes with regard to platform-based tech innovation (potential future model extension).*

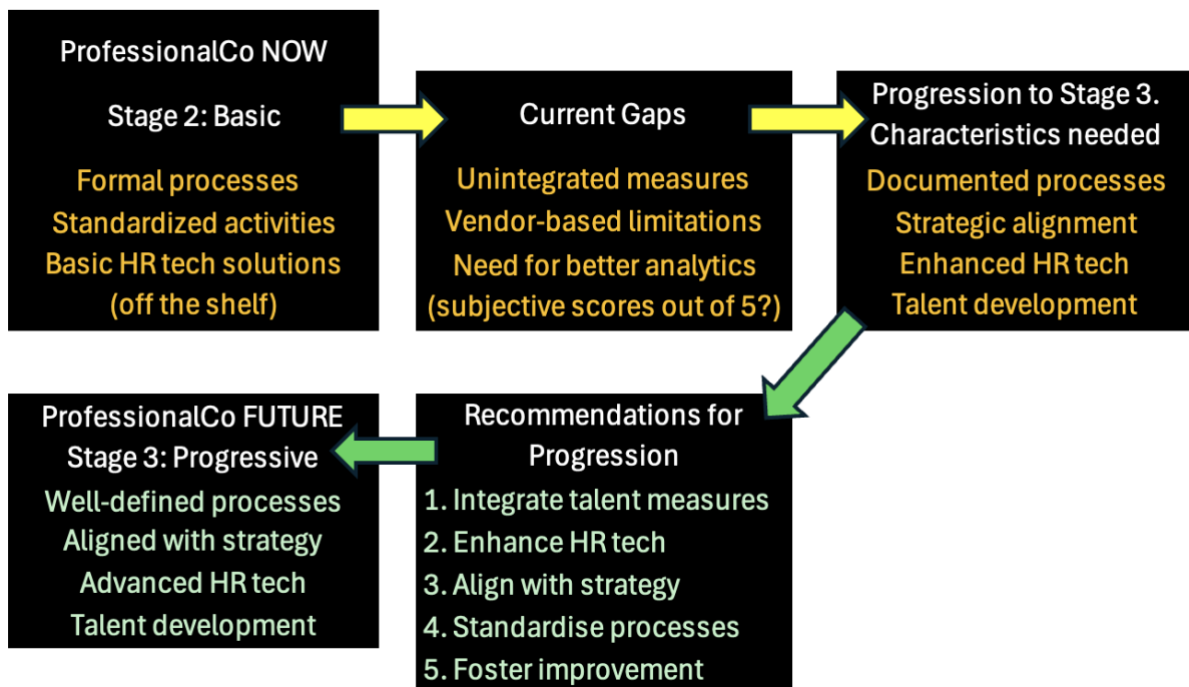
ProfessionalCo Should Own Its Talent Future, Now.

The industry trend across the APAC region toward platform-oriented business solutions mirrors global trends in advanced and emerging economies. Rapidly emerging and scaling small-to-medium enterprises need knowledge-based professional services like ProfessionalCo. ProfessionalCo needs talent. Talented individuals and teams need to know that ProfessionalCo has a cohesive and forward-thinking strategy if they are to have a home or a destination in ProfessionalCo.

Using Talent Maturity Management methodology (Deloitte, 2017), ProfessionalCo is still positioned at stage 2, less than halfway to becoming an optimised or transformative talent management enterprise. The following flow chart identifies gaps and the basic roadmap to follow in moving from Basic to Progressive.

For a skills reliant services business in a competitive global marketplace, such progression aligns with strategic priorities.

Next Steps (Talent Management Maturity Analysis)



ProfessionalCo's growth lies in HR tech, consistent processes, and strategic alignment. Moving beyond Stage 2 (above) will unlock greater opportunity within APAC (Deloitte, 2017). A reusable, scalable platform for talent management is an essential step. A sustainable, culturally suited platform can only begin with internal development and ownership. Such platforms offer greater adaptability and responsiveness than vendor solutions (Gartner, 2023a).

Developing consistent, transparent policies for talent management must be internally driven. Addressing the business-wide need for disambiguation needs to happen from the ground up and involve all levels of management. Strategic HR alignment is crucial for achieving organisational goals (Ulrich, 2017).

We also propose elements of a teams / teaming model for this process and explain why we make these recommendations. Stakeholder input into the principles and policies conveyed internally on the new platform will be essential for successful stakeholder adoption.

Finally, internal ownership of these processes and this platform will build deep resilience, commercially and internally. Acquisition and development of the capacities necessary to build, own and grow this technology will future-proof ProfessionalCo. We see an exciting opportunity for strategic alignment between business priorities and platform ownership which we will also discuss as we explain our recommendations.

ProfessionalCo – McKinsey 7S Snapshot with Commentary

Strategy	Grow talent & revenue.	Highly replicable strategy, almost entirely dependent on talent / knowledge-based assets.
Structure	Centralised hierarchy but largely flat across BU's	Main friction re TM policies between HR and line managers.
Systems	Vendor solution, tolerance for subjective and objective measurement	Outdated, lacks agility and customisability for a large organisation operating across a diverse territory, and competitive market.
Shared Values	Teamwork and excellence	Disambiguation needed to ensure continued teamwork. Modernisation of talent management needed to preserve and grow excellence.
Skills	Consulting. Accounting. Finance. Taxation. Digital Transformation. Finance.	Solid offer but the same skill set was available at the turn of the century. Urgent need to update services and consider more scalable model.
Staff	High quality talent, focus on retention and development.	Acquisition in competitive market limiting factor on potential to grow rapidly.
Style	Brand-driven leadership, autonomous operation, supportive management,	Style and systems have become misaligned. Modern brand should drive engagement with new talent and new clients. Update needed.





The Need for Internal Development

Strategy is the ultimate 'Why?'. Strategy also makes it easy to say 'no' (Biddle, 2023). ProfessionalCo has a clearly stated strategic objective: growing talent and revenue. Aligning HR with this objective is vital, and investing in an internally developed platform solution is essential.

Making HR a strategic partner rather than an administrative function will yield better outcomes for talent management and send strong signals to the market for talent and clients (Ulrich, 2017). This supports revenue growth, competitive advantage, and prepares the organisation for market expansion (CIPD, 2023).

Company-specific tools for data-driven decision-making provide significant advantages in agility, analytics, and comprehension. Predictive analytics can help anticipate turnover risks, uncover trends, and inform strategic initiatives (Gartner, 2023b). For ProfessionalCo, this means proactively addressing potential talent gaps and aligning HR strategies with business needs.

Internally developed platforms can respond more quickly to market changes and internal feedback, enhancing their competitive edge (Bersin, 2013). Faster implementation of updates and organisation-specific new features all support higher performance.

Company	Transition Period	Internal Solution	Employee Size at Transition	Estimated Cost	Key Benefits
	Early 2000s	People Analytics	~2,000	Millions for data infrastructure and technology	Improved hiring, retention, and company culture
	Mid-2000s	Custom HR Management Solutions	~1,500	Several million dollars for development and maintenance	Transparency, flexibility, continuous feedback
	Late 2000s	Suite of HR Tools	~20,000	Tens to hundreds of millions for comprehensive tools	Efficient management of global workforce
	Early 2010s	HR Analytics Platform	~90,000	Tens of millions for analytics platform	Better insights into performance and development

Notable global brands such as Google (2021), Microsoft (2022), Amazon (2022), and Netflix (2023) have transitioned to internally developed HR/TM technology. See Reference List for sources.

Internally developed metrics, from cross-functional work between HR and BU teams, should enhance performance management and offer greater relevance than generic metrics from external solutions. Specific KPIs enabled through internal development better drive desired behaviours and strategic goals (London & Smither, 1999). By integrating these KPIs, ProfessionalCo ensures employee performance directly contributes to strategic objectives.

Moreover, internally developed HR platform technologies enable transparent and consistent communication about talent management practices and strategic goals. Consistent, clear communication—“clear is kind” (Brown, 2018 via Stratton, 2024) — builds trust and engagement, reinforcing alignment between individual and organisational goals (Kotter, 2012). This is particularly important as ProfessionalCo navigates complex cultural and organisational dynamics across APAC.

ProfessionalCo fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, with targeted learning and development to equip team members to achieve strategic objectives. An internally developed platform would help address the need for disambiguation and dynamically support personalised pathways and organisational outcomes (Smith, 2022).

Organisational Structures to Support New Tech Initiatives

There are strong arguments for our recommendations to support reviews of internal processes and implementation of the new internal platform.

“The shift to cloud-based systems enables organisations to be more agile and scalable, meeting the dynamic needs of modern businesses” (Gartner, 2023a). Technological advancement of TM / HR within ProfessionalCo is essential to support the business strategy of growing talent and revenue. But evolving technology without addressing ongoing questions within the business will not enhance outcomes.

The following table is a draft approach to identifying and recruiting existing and external capacity needed for internal platform development.

Talent Requirements Table: Internal Platform Development

Role	Key Responsibilities	Audit Existing Teams For Talent / Skills	Skills Needed Externally	Build Additional Capacity for Testing & Commercialization?
Platform Engineers	Develop, deploy, and maintain the HR tech platform	IT, Digital Transformation	Advanced platform architecture, scalability	Yes
Cloud Services	Manage cloud infrastructure, ensure scalability and reliability	IT Infrastructure, Cloud Operations	Cloud security, multi-cloud management	Yes
Cybersecurity	Protect platform from cyber threats, ensure data security	IT Security	Advanced threat detection, incident response	Yes
Product Management	Oversee product development lifecycle, ensure alignment with business goals	HR, Strategic Initiatives	Agile methodologies, user experience design	Yes
Legal	Ensure compliance with regulations, manage IP and contractual issues	Legal Department	Tech contracts, data privacy laws	No
Developers	Write and maintain code, develop new features	Software Development, IT	Full-stack development, API integration	Yes

We recommend drawing on internal talent as much as possible in the development of a technology-based solution to HR and TM. “Leveraging internal talent builds on existing knowledge and aligns with organisational culture and strategic goals” (Ulrich, 2017). Recruitment of fresh perspectives and specialised expertise is also essential to advance ProfessionalCo’s project success and sustainability (Hackman, 2002).

Dedicated Teams and Key Processes

Prior to deployment of any platform, it is essential that ProfessionalCo address internal questions of inconsistent messaging, inconsistent methodology around talent management and performance identification and development. Referring to the table on the following page, we recommend building teams to address 5 important cultural needs within the organisation. Working groups tasked specifically to understand and resolve these questions must engage cross-functionally and consider viewpoints from front line to C-suite.

Teaming should be used for 3 of these working groups, because this approach is “particularly effective for tasks that require specialised knowledge and adaptability to changing needs” (Edmondson, 2012).

Localisation and Customisation Team: review current differentiated understanding of talent through lens of APAC national boundaries and ProfessionalCo professional cultures (tax, consulting, etc). Identify and address fears and ignorance about diversity policies. Ensure platform development tailored to specific requirements of regional contexts and various professional groups.

Content Integration Team: Designing processes for HR and line managers to input, access and manage data on the platform. Must work closely with local BUs to understand needs & ensure effective integration.

Training Development Team: as platform approaches readiness, effective training programs and clear communication will be essential for all levels of team. Must localise programs to meet needs of different regions and professions.

Long-Term Teams & Teaming Table: Dedicated Teams and Key Processes

Key Process	Dedicated Team	Responsibilities	Approach	Existing Teams Involved	Additional Stakeholders	Management of Limitations
Consideration of priorities and language by profession	Localization and Customization Team	Considering different professional groups and regional contexts, ensuring cultural and professional relevance	Teaming	HR, Regional Offices, Business Unit representatives	Consulting, Accounting, Finance, Taxation, Digital Transformation	Manage expectations re tailoring for different professions and regions. Avoid complexity and implementation delays.
Development of consistent understanding of TM policies	Policy Development Team	Standardizing talent management policies, aligning with strategic goals	Long-Term Team	HR, Strategic Initiatives	Consulting, Accounting, Finance, Taxation, Strategy	Consistent understanding must embrace national nuances and cultural differences while still being broadly adoptable.
Development of key human integration for content management	Content Integration Team	Designing processes for HR or line managers to input and manage data on the platform	Teaming	HR, IT, Business Units	Consulting, Accounting, Finance, Taxation, Digital Transformation	Inconsistent data input and management practices should be avoided by integration requirements and incentives.
Development of training for platform use	Training Development Team	Creating training materials and programs for both managers and team members	Teaming	Learning & Development, HR	Consulting, Accounting, Finance, Taxation, Digital Transformation	Training programs can be designed to address all user needs effectively, to avoid varied platform usage.
Continuous Improvement and feedback integration	Continuous Improvement Team	Monitoring platform performance, collecting user feedback, and implementing ongoing enhancements	Long-Term Team	IT, Quality Assurance, User Experience	Consulting, Accounting, Finance, Taxation, Digital Transformation	Continuous improvement efforts require ease of access to feedback loops and open communication.
Expansion of ProfessionalCo's service offer	Tech Integration and Expansion Team	Integrating tech capacities to support existing knowledge-based services and developing new service offerings	Long-Term Team	IT, Strategic Initiatives	Consulting, Accounting, Finance, Taxation, Digital Transformation	Integrating new tech capacities may be challenging due to existing infrastructure limitations.

Long-term teams “provide stability and continuity, essential for strategic projects that evolve over time” (Hackman, 2002) and as such should be responsible for policy development.

Policy Development Team: standardise talent management policies beyond GFC era thinking to comprehensively align with strategic goals at the epoch of human-centred technology (Usher, 2024). Should include regional representation and consider regional nuance.

This team’s work will absorb the learnings and input of the teaming working groups and continue with policy development in partnership with the other long-term team project.

Continuous Improvement Team: monitor platform performance, collect user feedback from all regions and all professions, drive project generation for ongoing enhancements of platform, responsive to stakeholder feedback and business objectives.

Finally, it is crucial – as with any other high-performance vehicle – to always have a reliable tech team within reach.

Tech Integration (and Expansion) Team: Should include input from regional IT and digital transformation leaders to ensure alignment with local infrastructure capabilities. This team will ensure a more effective result whether the choice to commercially offer a platform product is ultimately taken.

The following insight precedes the platform era by decades but still resonates for all of the same reasons why an internal platform makes sense, and why the suggested team configuration above should enhance the likelihood of success.

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions. Responsiveness to feedback is essential for continuous improvement and ensuring that systems meet the actual needs of their users.” (Deming, 1986)

These recommendations are essential to the development and success of an internally engineered HR / TM solution. They need to be supported by a well-defined organisational structure within APAC to promote coordination, collaboration, and effective decision-making across different regions and business units. By implementing these recommendations, ProfessionalCo can ensure that its talent management and platform development initiatives align with strategic objectives, add the benefit of transparency within the organisation, and address ongoing ambiguity that is causing concern within the business and potentially impacting attractiveness to talent externally.

Financial Analysis

Basic Financials Simulation Based on 45,000+ Employees*

The rationale for an internal solution is clear. Risk managers must consider the initial outlay in the context of long-term profitability and scalability. The real risk is ignoring cultural growing pains and assuming current processes guarantee future success.

Risks	Internally Developed Platform	Off-the-Shelf Solution
Development Delays	High	Low
Scalability Issues	Low	Moderate
Vendor Lock-in	None	High
Customisation Limits	None	High
Data Security Concerns	Low	Moderate
Overall Feasibility	Medium-High	Medium

Category	Internally Developed Platform	Off-the-Shelf Solution
Initial Costs	Year 1	
Development/ Implementation	\$10,000,000	\$2,000,000
Training	\$500,000	\$300,000
Customisation	\$1,000,000	\$200,000
Total Initial Costs	\$11,500,000	\$2,500,000
Ongoing Annual Costs	Years 2-5	
Maintenance/Updates	\$1,000,000/year	\$500,000/year
Licensing Fees	N/A	\$1,500,000/year
Support and Training	\$200,000/year	\$100,000/year
Total Ongoing Costs (5 years)	\$4,800,000	\$8,000,000
Total Costs Over 5 Years	\$16,300,000	\$10,500,000
Ongoing Annual Costs	Years 6-10	
Maintenance/Updates	\$1,000,000/year	\$500,000/year
Licensing Fees	N/A	\$1,500,000/year
Support and Training	\$200,000/year	\$100,000/year
Total Ongoing Costs (10 years)	\$9,600,000	\$16,000,000
Total Costs Over 10 Years	\$21,100,000	\$18,500,000
Benefits	Year 1	
Improved Efficiency	\$2,000,000	\$1,500,000
Enhanced Customization	\$1,000,000	\$200,000
Better Talent Retention	\$1,000,000	\$500,000
Improved Talent Acquisition	\$4,500,000/year	\$2,250,000/year
Total Benefits Over 5 Years	\$42,500,000	\$20,250,000
Net Present Value (NPV) Over 5 Years	\$20,200,000	\$6,250,000
Total Benefits Over 10 Years	\$85,000,000	\$40,500,000
Net Present Value (NPV) Over 10 Years	\$42,200,000	\$15,500,000

*10% turn, \$10k acquisition cost, 2% CPI, 5% NPV

Benefits of Internal Development

The internal processes to undertake prior to development and deployment of this engineered platform offer the opportunity for a cultural reset with real stakeholder engagement.

Strategic alignment with the goals of growing talent and revenue will ensure the right settings are in place for all discussions and developments.

The resilience and brand enhancement possible from this type of upgrade will not be captured in lagging metrics for years to come.

Benefits	Description
Greater Agility	Ability to rapidly adapt and update the platform as needed to meet evolving business needs.
Business-Specific Solutions	Tailored functionalities and updates that align directly with ProfessionalCo's specific business requirements.
Rapid Updates	Faster implementation of updates and new features without relying on vendor schedules.
Scalability and Flexibility	Platform can grow and evolve with the business, ensuring long-term usability and relevance.
Positive Impact on Culture	Promotes a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within the organisation.
Greater Transparency	Enhances transparency in talent management practices and policies.
Improved Observability	Better tracking and analysis of talent management metrics and performance.
Individually Tailored Performance Pathways	Allows for customised development plans and career paths for employees.
Greater Attraction to External Talent	Positions ProfessionalCo as an innovative and attractive employer for top talent.
Capacity to Package with Existing Services	Enhances service offerings by integrating the platform with existing solutions like accounting and consulting.
Brand Enhancement	Strengthens brand identity and coherence through improved internal and external perception.
Attractiveness to Clients through Improved Performance	Demonstrates commitment to excellence and innovation, improving client trust and satisfaction.
Potentially Commercial Asset	Opportunity to develop the platform into a marketable product for other organisations.
Compliance and Security	Better control over data security and compliance with industry standards and regulations.
Cost Efficiency Over Time	Reduced long-term costs compared to vendor solutions, despite higher initial outlay.
Enhanced Employee Engagement and Retention	Customised talent management practices improve employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Drawbacks of Internal Development

Every major investment decision requires a deeply considered weighing of options.

The hazards of project management, the challenges of complex change, likelihood of disruption and the certainty of high initial outlay are all valid reasons for pause.

Your competitors will also be wrestling with this decision.

Drawbacks	Description
Initial High Outlay	Significant upfront investment required for development and implementation.
Need for Internal Management Infrastructure and Processes	Requires the establishment of robust internal management and governance structures.
Ongoing Management and Maintenance	Continuous internal resources needed for platform maintenance and updates.
Risk of Project Delays and Cost Overruns	Potential for delays and budget overruns if not managed effectively.
Dependence on Internal Expertise	Relies heavily on the availability and development of internal talent with the necessary skills.
Complex Change Management	Necessitates comprehensive change management strategies to ensure successful adoption and integration.
Potential for Initial Disruption	Possible initial disruption to business processes during the transition period.

Conclusion

Developing an internal HR and TM platform is a strategic move for ProfessionalCo, offering long-term benefits in agility, competitiveness, and organisational alignment. The pathway to a successful launch would necessarily cross some rough terrain. But addressing current challenges effectively through dedicated teams and a robust development process should elevate ProfessionalCo as both a leader and a destination within knowledge-based services within the APAC region.

By actively pursuing the recommended action of internally developing the technology needed for contemporary HR and TM, ProfessionalCo positions the organisation to go further. Building additional teams with in-demand technological skills should elevate ProfessionalCo's existing offer. A commercialised TM/HR platform would create a new asset class and also further strengthen the current offer.

From this first big step, some leaps of scale should follow.

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